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Achieving the four global objectives on forests and implementing the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is intended to facilitate the Forum's consideration of progress made in the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (forest instrument), as well as in reaching the global objectives on forests. The short time that has elapsed since the adoption of the forest instrument limited the opportunity of countries to initiate new actions. Nevertheless, the reports received provided valuable insights into action taken and progress made by countries in implementing the forest instrument.

The responses suggest the forest instrument has considerable potential to achieve its set objectives. However, countries have identified a number of areas that need to be addressed more efficiently in order to realize this potential. These include pressure on limited forest resources, missing valuation of forest products and ecosystem services, inadequate financial resources, lack of appropriate capacities, institutions and effective governance. It is also noteworthy that a number of countries find national forest programmes to be the main vehicle of implementing the forest instrument. It was also noted that several of the provisions of the forest instrument are being implemented as a result of initiatives taken before the adoption of the instrument.

The experiences drawn from the current reporting exercise also allowed for the identification of areas for methodological development in preparation of the review called for by the Forum decision on the multi-year programme of work. The report presents a set of recommendations in this regard.

* E/CN.18/2009/1.

** The delay in the issuance of the present note was due to the need to include updated information.

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Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	3
II.	Progress made in the implementation of the forest instrument	5
	A. Strengthening political commitment to sustainable forest management (1A)	6
	B. Financing sustainable forest management (1B)	6
	C. Capacity-building and technology transfer (1C)	7
	D. Stakeholder participation (1D)	7
	E. Enhanced international cooperation (1E)	8
	F. Forest law enforcement and governance (2A)	8
	G. International trade in forest products (2B)	8
	H. Protection of forests (2C)	9
	I. Science and research (2D)	9
	J. Public awareness and education (2E)	10
	K. Private sector and industry (2F)	10
	L. Indigenous and local communities (2G)	11
	M. Monitoring, assessment and reporting (2H)	11
III.	Progress made in achieving the four global objectives on forests	11
	A. Global objective 1: reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation	12
	B. Global objective 2: enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest dependent people	12
	C. Global objective 3: increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests	13
	D. Global objective 4: reverse the decline in official development assistance for sustainable forest management and mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of sustainable forest management	13
IV.	Future reporting	13
V.	Conclusions	16
VI.	Recommendations	17

I. Introduction

1. At its seventh session the United Nations Forum on Forests agreed on the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (forest instrument) that was subsequently adopted by the General Assembly on 17 December 2007 as resolution 62/98. The Forum also adopted resolution 7/1 on its new multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2015. The outcome of the seventh session opened a new era in the international forest policy process with the strongest ever focus on implementation and actions on the ground.

2. The main purpose of the forest instrument is to strengthen political commitment and action at all levels to implement effectively sustainable management of all types of forests and to achieve the shared global objectives on forests; to enhance the contribution of forests to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals; and to provide a framework for national action and international cooperation.[1]

3. Mindful of the purpose of the forest instrument, the Forum decided, in its resolution 7/1, that the main task for each session would be a discussion on the achievement of the global objectives on forests and the implementation of the forest instrument. In doing so, the Forum would also focus on progress made towards the achievement of sustainable forest management, as well as on the implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests and previous resolutions adopted by the Forum.

4. The Economic and Social Council, in decision 2007/277 on the provisional agenda for the eighth session of the Forum, to be held in 2008, requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report to facilitate the above-mentioned discussion. The present report intends to summarize the most recent information from various sources and to provide the first evaluation on progress made since the adoption of the forest instrument.

5. It being recognized that, according to resolution 7/1, the ninth session of the Forum in 2011 will have to assess the overall progress made in the implementation of the forest instrument and towards the achievement of the four global objectives on forests, and that the Secretary-General has been requested to prepare analytical consolidated reports to that end, the present paper also offers a series of actions for the consideration of the Forum to facilitate the preparations for that assessment. These recommendations are based also on the experiences gained in the course of the preparation of this report.

6. While a wealth of information is available on the state of the forest resources, in particular, the *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005* and the *State of the World's Forests* series, of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), information on actions and developments related to the forest instrument is much more scarce. The reasons for that include the fact that the forest instrument was only adopted in December 2007 and it is expected that there will be a natural time lag between the adoption of the instrument at the global level and its integration into national forest policies and programmes and eventual implementation. Thus, there was very limited time available for countries to take specific actions to implement the forest instrument and to monitor progress.

[1] General Assembly resolution 62/98, annex, para. 1.

7. In resolution 7/1, the Forum decided that countries should, on a voluntary basis, submit national reports on progress made in implementing the forest instrument and on progress towards the global objectives, according to a timetable established by the Forum.[2] However, no timetable was established prior to the eighth session of the Forum.

8. In the absence of defined reporting requirements, the secretariat developed a suggested format and invited countries to use the preparation of the Secretary-General's report on progress as an opportunity to voluntarily share the most recent national information on implementing the forest instrument and on the progress being made towards the achievement of the four global objectives on forests.

9. The logical basis for the format for gathering country information was the 25 national policies and measures and 19 action items related to international cooperation identified in paragraphs 6 and 7 of the forest instrument. In order to keep the information request within reasonable limits, these policies and measures were further grouped into 13 thematic clusters (see table below). These clusters were also used in other analytical works, including the mapping of financial resources needed for the implementation of the forest instrument.

Clusters of the forest instrument

Reference No.	*Cluster*	*Non-legally binding instrument*
	1. Cross-cutting thematic clusters	
1. 1A	Strengthening political commitment for sustainable forest management	6a, 6c, 6d, 6k, 6l, 7a, 7c
2. 1B	Financing sustainable forest management	6h, 6i, 6m, 7a, 7b, 7c, 7d, 7e
3. 1C	Capacity-building and technology transfer	6e, 6s, 6v, 7f, 7i, 7j, 7k, 7l, 7m
4. 1D	Stakeholder participation	6h, 6m, 6v, 6w, 6x, 6y, 7k
5. 1E	Enhanced international cooperation	7i, 7n, 7q, 7r, 7s
	2. Topical thematic clusters	
6. 2A	Forest law enforcement and governance	6n, 7h, 7i, 7j
7. 2B	International trade in forest products	6j, 6x, 7g, 7h, 7i, 7j
8. 2C	Protection of forests	6o, 6p, 6q
9. 2D	Science and research	6r, 6s, 7n, 7o, 7p
10. 2E	Public awareness and education	6t, 6u, 6v, 7j

[2] E/CN.18/2007/277, resolution 7/1, annex, para 17.

Reference No.	*Cluster*	*Non-legally binding instrument*
11. 2F	Private sector and industry	6e, 6h, 6i, 6m, 6w, 6x, 7a, 7f, 7k, 7m
12. 2G	Indigenous and local communities	6f, 6h, 6s, 6v, 6y, 7k
13. 2H	Monitoring, assessment and reporting	6b, 6g, 8, 9

10. At the time of completing the present report, voluntary national information had been submitted by 16 Member States, while 3 additional national reports had been received in a free format. In addition, the inputs provided by 29 regional and subregional entities in response to the survey conducted by the secretariat were also considered in the preparation of the report.

11. The national reports that were available at the time of writing were published at the Forum website (http://www.un.org/esa/forests/reports-unff8.html#memberstates). While the number of responses remained relatively limited, they proved to be extremely useful and gave an indication of the broad range of actions being undertaken in the countries. In addition, the preparation of the current report was further supported by information from other sources, such as the inputs of regional and subregional mechanisms, institutions, instruments, organizations and processes. These are also available on the Forum website (http://www.un.org/esa/forests/reports-unff8.html#regions).

II. Progress made in the implementation of the forest instrument

12. According to the voluntary reports, several Member States found that the forest instrument offered a unique opportunity to generate a strong political commitment for the promotion of sustainable forest management. Many of them concluded that the broad principles of the forest instrument were already embedded in their existing policies and legislation. In those countries, the forest instrument had not been formally recognized through any new legal or policy document. Rather, its elements had been considered and incorporated into existing policy and programme frameworks.

13. During the short period of time elapsed since the adoption of the forest instrument, some countries have started translating its text into their official languages and promoting awareness. Several countries also have expressed, especially through respective regional organizations and processes, high-level political commitment to the implementation of the instrument and to the four global objectives. A number of countries referred to their national forest programme as a framework for implementing the forest instrument, in particular in protecting and expanding forests.

14. It was noted in many responses that the time since the seventh session, and especially the adoption by the General Assembly, had been relatively short to achieve operational results in time-consuming policy and legal processes. Some developing countries with forests that are under tremendous pressure from such factors as rapid population growth and an expanding demand for products, for

example, charcoal and fuelwood, cautioned that it was very difficult to launch implementation programmes in the absence of strong policy and legislative frameworks.

15. The following sections include a detailed analysis of country responses, based on the 13 clusters of the forest instrument.

A. Strengthening political commitment to sustainable forest management (1A)

16. Many countries saw this cluster of recommendations and actions as the key to implementing sustainable forest management. In a number of cases, multifaceted approaches were adopted to engender political commitment. These included different strategic plans as well as national forest programmes. In other cases, political commitment was reached through development and adoption of new legislation. The process was accompanied by public awareness campaigns in order to guarantee broad stakeholder participation and public support.

17. Depending on national conditions and circumstances, instead of initiating work on stand-alone sectoral programmes, the provisions of the forest instrument were used for updating the existing matrix of policies, plans and initiatives developed over time, which together serve as a framework for action. Some developing countries attached increased importance to sustainable forest management through rural development policies and legislations, giving it an important role in providing livelihoods, diversifying income, while protecting the environment, including biodiversity, water resources, etc.

18. On the one hand, some members of the donor community reported on initiatives aimed at leveraging bilateral and multilateral assistance towards sustainable forest management to help build domestic capacity in recipient countries and support policy processes. On the other hand, some developing countries cautioned that, in the absence of national forest policies, programmes, adequate legislation, institutions and information, or the combination of these, there was little hope for successful implementation.

B. Financing sustainable forest management (1B)

19. The reports underlined the importance of funding in the support of sustainable forest management and stressed the inadequacy of the current level of financial resources. In terms of a framework for funding, most countries saw it linked to national forest programmes, with the national budget providing the bulk of the resources. While government funding remained the principal source of financing for sustainable forest management, there have been growing attempts to tap other sources. Some countries have set up specific forest funds to support sustainable management activities, such as infrastructure development and forest regeneration.

20. State forests in many countries were managed for multiple purposes, including the provision of social and environmental benefits to the society. However, many of these environmental and social outputs did not have a place in the market and therefore, the State needed to continue to fund them. The reports from donor

countries indicated that official development assistance was largely focused on capacity-building and forest law enforcement.

21. Countries also provided information about efforts and initiatives to mobilize greater private funding for sustainable forest management. Measures introduced to encourage such investment included special tax exempt or reduction and low-interest loans. It was also reported that, under certain circumstances, free market signals seemed efficient in encouraging private sector investment. Some new financial contributions, mostly in the context of climate change, including the Cool Earth Partnership and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility of the World Bank, were also recognized as cooperating actively with developing country efforts aimed at reducing greenhouse emissions and thereby promoting sustainable forest management.

C. Capacity-building and technology transfer (1C)

22. A number of countries highlighted the importance of capacity-building and technology transfer in achieving sustainable forest management and noted that a multitude of actions would be needed. Focus areas included: reforming and updating the legislative and policy frameworks; launching education and training programmes for different target audiences; developing information collection and communication systems; and strengthening research on a broad range of subjects, including sustainable forest management, sound use of wood, ecosystem services, etc.

23. Some donor countries reported on funding regional and bilateral education and training programmes. Countries affected by illegal harvesting and trade also started to adopt new technologies for tracking timber movement.

24. Several countries that had adopted national forest programmes noted that activities related to capacity-building and technology transfer were planned and implemented within that framework.

D. Stakeholder participation (1D)

25. Having recognized the importance of stakeholder participation, many countries implemented measures to promote closer cooperation and consultation in policy and legislative development, forest management planning, and, in some cases, in training and education. New policy initiatives increasingly recognized the role of civil society in the protection, conservation, management and sustainable development of environment and natural resources.

26. Some countries have explicit provisions in their national forest programmes to promote stakeholder involvement. These include support to the development and activities of private forest owner associations, associations of small forest owners, and public-private partnerships between State agencies and private enterprises or forest owner organizations.

27. Some donors used bilateral and multilateral cooperation, the latter especially through FAO and the International Tropical Timber Organization, to promote greater community involvement, as well as technical and scientific support to sustainable forest management in developing countries. In some countries with unevenly

developed regions special attention was paid to assist disadvantaged groups in rural areas.

E. Enhanced international cooperation (1E)

28. In recent years, new efforts towards greater international cooperation have emerged in many parts of the world with the realization that some of the problems, as well as opportunities related to sustainable forest management, could not be confined within national boundaries. The issues addressed through such cooperation include the role of forests in climate change, water supply, natural hazards, as well as support for sustainable forest management initiatives in developing countries.

29. Regional and subregional cooperation has grown considerably in the recent past, covering a broad range of issues contained in the forest instrument. Working in regional groups has also helped to reinforce national efforts to promote sustainable management of forests in many regions, as well as promoting the development and application of practical management tools, such as criteria and indicators. A detailed description of relevant regional cooperative activities can be found in the report of the Secretary-General on regional and subregional inputs (E/CN.18/2009/3).

F. Forest law enforcement and governance (2A)

30. Illegal and unsustainable activities, including conversion of land and harvesting of wood and non-wood products, are among the main reasons for continued deforestation and forest degradation. Major efforts have been undertaken to deal with these problems, both in producer and consumer countries. While timber-producing countries have taken steps to control illegal logging, timber-importing countries have been taking further steps to deal with the problem by adopting legislation aimed at halting the import and trade of illegally sourced timber. As a result, a number of countries have introduced timber procurement schemes with the aim of ensuring that only legally harvested timber is used. They are also working to encourage certification and licensing for the exportation and shipping of wood and wood products.

31. Donor countries have given high priority to funding projects and providing technical support to combat illegal logging and illegal trade. The 2003 European Union Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade, which involves several countries, focuses on governance reforms and capacity-building, to ensure that timber exported to the European Union comes only from legal sources. Most reporting countries were focusing on certification and verification schemes to prove that material is sourced from legal and well-managed forests.

G. International trade in forest products (2B)

32. Reporting countries recognized the importance of trade for sustainable forest management. The relevant provisions of the forest instrument focus on two areas: the legality and traceability of trade and trade flows, and the valuation of goods and services from forests.

33. Actions taken in the first area have several elements in common with those on governance and law enforcement. These include promotion of certification, revision of the criteria used in certification standards, and measures aimed at combating illegal logging and associated trade. Regional entities have been focusing on developing measures to curb such activities, while some donors have been supporting such efforts with technical aid. A number of other donor countries have funded projects aimed at addressing illegal activities related to forests.

34. The reports indicated much less development in the other area, that is, valuing the full range of products and services and internalizing the externalities from forests. An exception to this is the development related to the recognition of the role of forests in mitigating climate change. Several country-level and regional markets have evolved in the past several years as a result of the evolving climate change regime.[3]

H. Protection of forests (2C)

35. Reflecting the need for forest protection, many Member States have taken action to expand the protected forest areas in their countries. Protective measures are often concerned with the protection of forest biological diversity. Actions taken represent a broad spectrum, from encouraging voluntary measures by landowners to protect unique sites and habitats, to protecting almost all native forests by legislation. Some countries with federal structures have signed agreements with States to ensure conservation and sustainable management of native forests.

36. Other measures were aimed at the creation of interconnected protected area networks or green corridors, facilitating monitoring and research of natural processes in forest ecosystems, and helping to adapt forest stands to changing climate. Several actions were taken to develop an effective system of forest fire monitoring and oppression, as well as to implement preventive measures against forest fires. Monitoring and research on forest pests and diseases and their impact on forest ecosystems were also emphasized in the reports.

I. Science and research (2D)

37. Forest research covered a broad range of issues, and although several activities started before the adoption of the forest instrument, they are fully in line with the relevant provisions. Research activities ranged from tree genetics to developing new and improved products and processes to maximize the value from timber and to developing environmentally sustainable and economically viable production and treatment regimes. Achieving a greater understanding of environmental sustainability and the integration of forestry in multiple land-use policies and programmes were also mentioned as important challenges. Substantive research has been undertaken on adaptation of forest species to climate change.

38. Many countries have taken action to strengthen the capacity of national and regional research institutions, and to improve economic, legal, institutional and information instruments to strengthen technological development, innovations and

[3] Further information can be found in the report of the Secretary-General on forests and climate change (E/CN.18/2009/4).

the transfer of knowledge into practice. Since most of the research organizations are under public ownership, funding of those efforts has been through either the national budget or international sources.

39. Among the international efforts mentioned, the financial support provided for the Collaborative Partnership on Forests Global Forest Expert Panels (formerly entitled Joint Initiative on Science and Technology) was also noted. With this support, the initiative developed a comprehensive report on adaptation to climate change, which contributes to the Forum's deliberations as a background document.

J. Public awareness and education (2E)

40. Actions on public awareness and education have taken many forms in the reporting countries. Formal forestry education is based in specialized colleges and universitie many of the countries. The courses are designed with increasing focus on sustainability and related emerging forestry issues. Several of the educational programmes are aimed at forest owners with no formal forestry education and many institutions are heavily engaged in different extension programmes.

41. Promoting awareness plays a critical role in forestry; countries are therefore giving increasing attention to getting the public to understand the role of forests and forestry and thereby promote the idea of sustainable forest management. Some countries have a forest or forestry day or week with visibility events involving the broader community and especially the youth, and which receives broad coverage in the written and electronic media. Some others maintain awareness-raising campaigns, for example, on forest fires and other forest-related issues, and arrange for exhibitions, films, magazine articles, provide information material and run visitor centres. In achieving these, aims countries are now resorting more and more to modern technology, such as dedicated web pages.

K. Private sector and industry (2F)

42. The increasing recognition of the role of the private sector in achieving sustainable forest management is reflected in the reports of many countries. Substantive support is provided to private forest owners associations, voluntary associations of small forest land owners and public-private partnerships with participation of forest-related enterprises in a number of them. In some countries, tax concessions have been granted in order to boost domestic timber sales. In some cases, both income and corporate taxes have been reduced to support installation of more efficient wood-processing technologies. At the same time, corporate taxes for investing in foreign plantation establishments have also been reduced.

43. In some countries, there is very little government ownership or involvement in commercial forestry. In these cases, the Government is seen as the provider, through legislation, of an enabling environment that encourages private business development in a sustainable manner.

L. Indigenous and local communities (2G)

44. The reports provided insight into efforts of countries to support indigenous and local communities. Most of them offer special treatment to these groups. Options range from simple and practical measures, such as providing firewood in winter, to more conceptual solutions, including the promotion of participation in planning and decision-making processes. In some countries, the programmes encompass several activities, such as the creation of new industries through utilization of locally available materials, cultures, traditions, etc. Some other Governments have set up funding mechanisms to develop appropriate frameworks to preserve traditional knowledge about nature and require both central and regional governments to consult widely with the public when environmental policy decisions are made. Some countries have specific programmes to alleviate poverty in indigenous communities.

45. Donor countries also underlined the need to prioritize measures for improving the conditions of indigenous people. In some countries, actions aimed at indigenous and local communities find further support in the broader rural or regional development context.

M. Monitoring, assessment and reporting (2H)

46. The forest instrument underlined the importance of monitoring, assessment and reporting in the achievement of its objectives and considered those activities an integral part of efforts towards sustainable forest management. In spite of this fact, only a few countries reported on related developments. Most of the activities undertaken were related to the criteria and indicator processes, as well as to the programmes and projects of international organizations dealing with data collection and analysis. Some countries mentioned a weak information base and a lack of data among the main obstacles to strategic planning and efficient implementation.

47. The role of monitoring, assessment and reporting was also emphasized in the context of law enforcement, trade and forest protection. The respective paragraphs above provide further information on related activities.

III. Progress made in achieving the four global objectives on forests

48. In spite of the limited time since the adoption of the forest instrument, some countries had taken specific actions to achieve the four global objectives, such as enacting relevant legislation or taking other specific policy initiatives. Others placed new emphasis on the forest instrument in their existing legal and policy frameworks. Commitments to the forest instrument and the four global objectives have also been underlined by decisions and actions of regional and subregional entities, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, comprising 10 countries, or the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, consisting of 47 countries.

49. Due to obvious linkages between the implementation of the forest instrument and progress made towards the global objectives on forests, much of the information provided in the previous section is relevant for and reflected in the following paragraphs.

A. Global objective 1: reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation

50. The most recent available statistics show a continuous decline of global forest cover over the past two decades.[4] During the period 2000-2005, the annual loss was 13 million hectares. However, through reforestation and afforestation and the establishment of forest plantations totalling 5.7 million hectares per year, the annual net loss of global forest cover was estimated at 7.3 million hectares. A detailed analysis of the issue is contained in the report of the Secretary-General on reversing the loss of forest cover, preventing forest degradation in all types of forests and combating desertification, including in low forest cover countries (E/CN.18/2009/5).

51. Country responses show that the forest instrument had provided new impetus to a number of them to address the loss of forest cover. Several countries took action to maintain and expand forest cover under existing policies and legislation; others were relying on national forest programmes to help achieve success in this area. In addition to developing afforestation and reforestation programmes, countries affected by illegal logging and other unsustainable practices launched initiatives to address these problems specifically. Donor countries engaged in new technical cooperation projects, provided funding and worked with regional organizations to help recipient countries to expand their forest cover.

52. Although forest degradation is obviously an important component of the deterioration of the global forest cover, this phenomenon has hardly been mentioned in national reports, which suggests that more attention should be paid to this complex problem.

B. Global objective 2: enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest dependent people

53. This has been a key objective of many reporting countries, especially those with large numbers of forest-dependent people. Most of them have been promoting the objective under existing policies, legislation and programmes. The focus of forest policy in general has been to increase economic and social benefits from the state forests and to encourage appropriate development in regions. However, success at the national level is significantly dependent on the implementation of policies relating to other sectors as well. This integrated nature has made it difficult to isolate the solutions to forestry.

54. A major obstacle has been the lack of proper valuation of a range of forest goods and services. Some countries have been attempting to fill this void; their calculations showed that the social benefits of forests attributable to recreation, tourism, water production from boreholes and springs and improvements in agricultural yields due to soil conservation, were several fold higher than the value of timber sales. It is difficult, however, to establish the place in the market for these goods and services.

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[4] FAO, *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005*.

C. Global objective 3: increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests

55. Countries reported having taken a variety of approaches to increase the area of protected forests, as noted above. Some have used stricter management planning, while others have promoted certification. Countries have also declared new areas as protected forests. Some donor countries reported on provision of funding to help developing countries to expand and intensify protection of forest areas.

56. With regard to the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests, some importing countries have attempted to address the matter through timber-procurement schemes to ensure that only sustainably managed or legally harvested timber is used. At the same time, timber producers have increasingly adopted timber certification schemes to ensure that their wood products come from sustainably managed forests.

D. Global objective 4: reverse the decline in official development assistance for sustainable forest management and mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of sustainable forest management

57. The report of the Secretary-General on finance and other means of implementation for sustainable forest management (E/CN.18/2009/9), and the note by the secretariat on financing for sustainable forest management: mobilizing financial resources to support the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and to promote sustainable forest management (E/CN.18/2008/2) provide the most comprehensive description of the financial flows in the forest sector including official development assistance. It should be noted, however, that serious information gaps exist and fully comprehensive data on official development assistance flows for sustainable forest management or other forms of funding for forestry are currently not available.

58. Not every responding country provided information related to this objective. Some reporting countries were newly emerging aid donors who were still in the process of setting objectives and mechanisms. Some of the major donors have maintained their funding for forestry and have supported a new climate change-related multilateral funding mechanism which covers some aspects of sustainable forest management. Others focused attention on supporting efforts towards law enforcement and governance in developing countries.

IV. Future reporting

59. Based on the tasks of the future sessions of the Forum laid down in the multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2015, a major challenge in the coming years will be reporting on the status of sustainable forest management worldwide and on progress made in the implementation of the forest instrument,

including the achievement of the global objectives on forests and the implementation of the proposals of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/ Intergovernmental Forum on Forests for action and the previous resolutions of the United Nations Forum on Forests. In addition, the sessions of the Forum will address a number of important themes and critical issues, including means of implementation, forest law enforcement and governance, and regional and subregional inputs, among others. Consequently, innovative approaches will be needed to prevent the reporting burden on Member States from growing.

60. Voluntary national reports will be particularly relevant for the ninth session in 2011 and the eleventh session in 2015. For the ninth session, the Secretary-General has been requested to prepare, in consultation with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, an analytical consolidated report on overall progress made in the implementation of the forest instrument, and towards the achievement of the four global objectives on forests. The Secretary-General has also been requested to prepare a similar report for the eleventh session of the Forum which will further include an assessment of the international arrangement on forests and the contribution of forests to the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

61. The measuring of progress would require a set of indicators that are objective, reliable and feasible to report on. In this respect, priority should be given to using indicators from existing reporting processes, as these are most likely to meet the above criteria. The secretariat analysed the major reporting processes and found that while a wealth of information is available from them there are considerable gaps remaining.

62. The broadest thematic coverage is provided by the FAO *Forest Resources Assessment*, which comprises an extremely rich set of information describing the physical conditions of forest resources and it could provide a sound basis for measuring progress made in reaching the global objectives, in particular, the first three. Selected indicators from regional criteria and indicator processes could complement the *Forest Resources Assessment* dataset, but their global applicability has yet to be investigated.

63. The global objectives are very complex and encapsulate several conceptual elements; therefore, measuring progress also requires a complex set of indicators. A good example of this complexity is reflected by global objective 1, which includes the concepts of deforestation, sustainable forest management and forest degradation. While deforestation is sufficiently covered through the indicators describing the change in forest area, considerably less information is available on forest degradation, due to several reasons, including the conceptual difficulties surrounding the definition of the term itself.[5] The other objectives, being more complex in nature, represent even bigger challenges to monitor.

64. The secretariat analysis revealed that even more serious information gaps exist in available indicators for measuring progress in the implementation of the forest instrument. There is only one thematic cluster (2C. Forest protection) which is

[5] Led by FAO, a new initiative has been launched within the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to address terminology and methodology issues related to forest degradation. The initiative will present its findings at the thirteenth World Forestry Congress and the Fifteenth Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2009.

adequately covered, indicators are available to a limited extent only for the others, and in some cases are almost completely missing.

65. The FAO *Forest Resources Assessment* indicators have the advantage that they can be seen as the only comprehensive global criteria and indicators process covering all member States of the Forum. Indicators from the other criteria and indicators process could be used, to the extent possible, in preparing for the review at the ninth session of the Forum. A continued methodological development, conducted in cooperation with FAO, the International Tropical Timber Organization, other relevant members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests as well as criteria and indicator processes, could lead to an expanded set of indicators that can be incorporated in future *Forest Resources Assessment* exercises and used in the review of effectiveness due at the eleventh session.

66. In reviewing the opportunities and challenges arising from the adoption of the forest instrument and the multi-year programme of work of the Forum, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests Strategic Dialogue in February 2008 concluded that recent developments required new emphasis on reporting and associated capacity-building. Partnership members agreed on a number of measures in this regard including revitalizing the Partnership's Joint Initiative on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting, harmonizing monitoring, assessment and reporting activities along the lines of the seven thematic elements of sustainable forest management,[6] bolstering support to criteria and indicator processes, enhance cooperation on the national level and build upon and strengthen the joint forest sector questionnaire on forest products and the *Forest Resources Assessment* process.[7]

67. It is important to note that, although reviewing progress is a task for every session of the Forum, biennial reporting of quantitative indicators is not very meaningful, since the frequency of collection of data is normally much lower: about 10 years accompanied with five-year midterm updates. Moreover, annual and biennial reporting often provide inconclusive data for recording trends or shifts in trends. In this regard, the timing built into the *Forest Resources Assessment* process fits perfectly with the Forum's reporting requirements. The *Forest Resources Assessment* 2010 could feed directly into the reporting to the ninth session in 2011. Consideration should be given to how FAO could help with preliminary results of the *Forest Resources Assessment* 2015 update in preparing for the eleventh session, which will review the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and the forest instrument, and consider all options for the future.

68. The proximity and similar frequency of the sessions of the Forum and the FAO Committee on Forestry give way to new synergies. One of the FAO flagship forestry publications, the biennial *State of the World's Forests* is traditionally launched at Committee on Forestry sessions, with the aim of facilitating informed discussions. The publication's intention is to draw a comprehensive picture on the status of forests and forestry worldwide, with each issue having a specific thematic focus.

69. In the year of the adoption of the forest instrument, the *State of the World's Forests 2007* focused on progress towards sustainable forest management, putting

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[6] United Nations Forum on Forests resolution 4/3, para. 6; E/CN.18/2004/17.

[7] Summary report: Collaborative Partnership on Forests Strategic Dialogue, section 5. http://www.fao.org/forestry/media/14657/1/0/.

more emphasis on the supply side, that is, forest resources. Therefore, this publication, together with the dataset in *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005*, can be considered as a reliable baseline for future assessments of progress. The next issue of the *State of the World's Forests* attempts to address the demand side, assessing the likely impacts of current developments on forests, such as population, economic development and globalization, and considers how forestry will have to adapt for the future.[8] Careful programming would allow the future editions of the *State of the World's Forests* to also address the overall themes of the Forum's session in that year. By doing so, the publication could provide an account on general progress towards sustainable forest management and serve high-level international discussions at two forums.

70. Based on the preceding discussion the most practical approach, at least in the short term, through the ninth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests in 2011, would be to separate national reporting into two parts. Reporting on the four global objectives on forests should be quantifiable, using existing indicators where possible and developing a few new indicators, including for the fourth global objective, while the reporting on most of the forest instrument would be qualitative in nature. The biennial discussion on progress could be based on the input from the respective issue of the *State of the World's Forests*, as well as the summary of the voluntary national reports prepared for that session.

71. The review of progress at the ninth and eleventh sessions of the Forum could be based on:

- An enhanced set of indicators (quantifiable information) related to the global objectives, derived from existing reporting processes, in particular the *Forest Resources Assessment*, and supplemented by voluntary national reports;
- Qualitative information related to the implementation of the forest instrument, obtained through voluntary national reports prepared for those sessions;
- Other existing sources of information, including from members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, criteria and indicator processes, as well as relevant regional and subregional forest-related mechanisms, institutions, instruments, organizations and processes.

V. Conclusions

72. **Although only a limited number of country responses were available for supporting the preparation of the present report and the sample is too limited for drawing far-reaching conclusions, the reports, nevertheless, provided valuable information on implementation and progress.**

73. **From the responses and the information gleaned from regional inputs, it is evident that countries have a positive outlook on the forest instrument and the four global objectives on forests therein, as a basis for promoting sustainable forest management. The responses suggest that the forest instrument has considerable potential to achieve its set objectives.**

[8] FAO: *State of the World's Forests 2009*, Foreword, paras. 2 and 4. Manuscript courtesy of FAO.

74. A number of countries referred to new or updated national forest programmes as the main policy tool to translate the forest instrument into national conditions and serve as the main vehicle for implementation. In several cases, the ongoing processes aimed at the implementation of the forest instrument actually started before its adoption, clearly reflecting that the forest instrument embraces the results of the outcomes of preceding international negotiations.

75. Some countries provided information on the successful integration of forestry agendas with other development policies, in particular rural development, thereby contributing to the integrated development of remote and left-behind regions. It was also noted that implementation of forestry programmes is closely linked to and influenced by implementation of related major strategic programmes. Several responses stressed the close connection to developments in the area of climate change.

76. At the same time, responses also showed that there are major challenges that need to be addressed in order to achieve the aims of the forest instrument. Some of the countries were struggling to retain the existing forest cover under heavy population and related pressures in the absence of effective legal and policy frameworks or adequate funding sources. Inadequate financial resources, weak law enforcement and governance, deficiencies of the institutional framework, lack of valuation of forest goods and services, information, research and technology transfer were identified as main obstacles to implementation. Successful implementation of the forest instrument including achievement of the global objectives, is subject to the removal of these impediments.

77. The analysis of the voluntary national contributions also allowed for the drawing of conclusions and the development of recommendations for future reporting, in particular, in preparing for the review at the ninth and eleventh sessions of the Forum.

78. While a wealth of information is already available from different sources, in particular, in member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and in regional criteria and indicator processes, further work is needed to select and develop appropriate indicators for measuring progress in the implementation of the forest instrument. Members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests could further harmonize major reporting processes and provide as much of the needed information as possible from existing sources and processes.

79. Since monitoring the implementation of the forest instrument requires qualitative information not available elsewhere, it is important that the Forum establishes timetables for reporting on such information, as stipulated in paragraph 17 of the multi-year programme of work of the Forum for the period 2007-2015.

VI. Recommendations

80. Noting also the analyses provided in the reports of the Secretary-General on regional and subregional inputs (E/CN.18/2009/3), on issues of forests in a

changing environment (E/CN.18/2009/4, E/CN.18/2009/5 and E/CN.18/2009/6) and on finance and other means of implementation for sustainable forest management (E/CN.18/2009/9), as well as the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on recommendations for addressing key challenges of forests in a changing environment (E/CN.18/2009/8), the Forum may wish to:

(a) Note the magnitude of problems that some countries or group of countries face in implementing the forest instrument and underline the need to specifically address those problems;

(b) Invite Member States to increase efforts to use the forest instrument as the main policy tool for integrating sustainable forest management into national development policies;

(c) Invite Member States to consider intersessional activities in support of the implementation of the forest instrument;

(d) Invite the donor community, as well as members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, to give priority in their programmes and actions to support aimed at removing obstacles to the implementation of the forest instrument;

(e) Call for enhanced global and regional, as well as interregional and intraregional cooperation to address key impediments and invite the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to support those initiatives.

81. **The Forum may further wish to:**

(a) Establish a timetable for voluntary national reporting for the ninth session of the Forum;

(b) Invite the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to continue its efforts in harmonizing forest-related reporting, with particular emphasis on the implementation of the forest instrument and the progress towards the achievement of the global objectives on forests;

(c) Request the secretariat to develop synergies, with relevant members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, as well as criteria and indicator processes and other regional and subregional processes, to prepare consolidated analytical reports, and further request the secretariat to engage in collaboration and cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in this regard;

(d) Consider intersessional work in support of streamlining forest-related reporting and increasing national capacities to contribute to the review at the ninth session.